

IMAC IT Subcommittee Minutes

November 14, 2002

DHFS Rm. #672, Madison

Introductions were made, Jeanne Brandl to take minutes, last month's minutes were accepted.

Change Centers~

Milwaukee County currently runs a change center for their customers to report changes by telephone. Dane County is discussing and planning for theirs to begin early next year. Outagamie County also is interesting in setting up a change center in their county.

Dane County

A handout was distributed outlining the Dane County plan for their change center. They have been working on it for about 4 months and are researching Milwaukee County's center and centers in other states. Some of the same software programs may be considered. Caseloads continue to increase, but there is no expected increase in staff. They have received a grant for equipment \$25,000 to \$30,000. They plan to have 1 full time Economic Support Specialist and 2 half time specialists.

Phone calls are being tracked to determine what time of day staff will be needed for the change center. Lots of changes to the plans are expected before the actual implementation in January or February. Both the regular staff and change center staff will be trained in the process. Software programs will track each phone call, who takes the call, and mis-directed calls. They expect 2500 ~ 4000 call per month. Most work will be done by telephone, but verification will be returned to the change center and comments will be made in CARES. Not much will be done with W-2 cases. A desktop aid will be developed for persons answering the phones. Most staff is aware that a change center is being planned, but the whole staff has not yet been informed regarding the plan. This will occur in December.

The positions will not be a promotion in Dane County. Hopefully, volunteers will be recruited. Some staff have already expressed interest. The intent is to focus on better customer service. The change center should take a lot of work off the regular ES workers. All programs are covered, but EBD and W-2 cases may not be confirmed/completed and will be referred to the caseworker for completion.

Milwaukee County

The Milwaukee County Change Center has been in operation for almost one year. It was modeled after one in Atlanta, Georgia. A folder was presented containing materials and statistics based from their change center.

Software, APROPOS, for the center was purchased using Food Stamp reinvestment money. Their software and phone system is very sophisticated. The software allows screens to pop up based on the case number or social security number entered from

the customer's phone call. Then a prompt is entered indicating the type of change. A QA Technician (change agent) responds. There are 7 agents plus one supervisor, with the capacity to expand to 20 agents. Three years ES experience is required and 2~3 weeks of training before beginning the position (at a higher rate of pay). They also had other training in customer service, team building and critical thinking (putting pieces together). They have a packet of job aids and other materials. Quality is stressed. Each worker is held responsible for errors they make. Some staff did not make it. If workers think the change center made an error, they take it to the supervisor, who takes it to the change center supervisor. The worker then has to fix it and make a presentation about it to the other staff. QC errors are tracked and by who confirmed the case, not by who "owns" it.

A series of charts and graphs identify the number of calls received, the peak days, and other activities. The busiest times are between 11 AM and 2 PM.

The change center is now moving physically to a new location. In the future, they want to direct appointments through the change center. Some workers refer all calls to the change center, even when not appropriate. There have been some problems with the phone system's operation.

No formal promotion or advertising has been done for the Change Center yet. Customers really like the change center, mostly because they actually get to talk to someone. A survey for customer satisfaction is being produced. The Milwaukee County error rate is going down, but the primary goal is to reduce the workload. There is concern over a high stress load on the change center agents; being attached to headphones and computers constantly is difficult. The average Milwaukee County caseload is between 351 and 405, with community programs at 561. Data exchanges are not done unless caught at review time. Most ESS do like the change center. The change agents only contact the worker if there are problems on a case, not for every change. When the center has down time, they work on reports that usually never get done, like the address automation report done recently.

As a customer, you must have a touch-tone phone and your case number (or SSN) to use the change center system. The system controls when a new call can come through to a change agent. The agent has to complete the call process by making a comment in CARES and uses the computer to indicate that it is complete. Then a new call can come through. The agent knows who the caller is before the answer. Apropos picks up the case number and brings up CARES through the database. Usually, no more than 10 minutes pass before the call is picked up. If longer than that, the customer has a choice to leave a message. No messages are taken after hours. Since everything is so well documented, there is no way that a customer can claim that they reported something and it wasn't acted on. Every case that is picked up by a change agent has a comment in CARES with the initials "MCCC". Calls from customers who speak a language other than English are referred to a translator. A manual tickler is kept for follow-up on cases. The 10 days is monitored to make sure changes are processed on

time. The Change Center doesn't do alerts. Their main focus is on MA, FS and Child Care cases.

Discussion on Change Centers

There would be security problems for a state-wide change center that would cover all counties. As with most software programs, a license is required to use Apropos and it would have to be purchased for each agent to use. Some counties may prefer to set up their own system and continue to use it rather than a state-wide system. Smaller agencies may prefer to keep changes under specific worker's control as the volume of changes is considerably less than in a larger county. The state is not interested in forcing this type of system on the counties at this time ~ discussion only. Milwaukee County suggests that if considering a change center to get ideas from experienced workers who work with customers. Food Stamp reinvestment funds may be available.

Project Priorities

We can remove 272 closures from the list of priorities since it has been resolved, but future deductible changes are still possible and should remain. Communication can now become our #1 priority. The IMAC website will have updates and out minutes along with upcoming projects. We need to make some effort to get this web site out to all groups/persons and to indicate to CARES coordinators to pass it on ~ possibly through DXBM?

What ineffective communication methods can be eliminated or changed? What ones can be improved with enhanced distribution, such as CARES Highlights?

Since the IM/FS websites are being converted to DHFS, they will now have that look and feel. All forms, manuals and information should be on one website (except W-2 and Child Care which will have a link). We may no longer have the same password requirements that were needed for DWD websites. All forms, manuals, and information are public, so the Extranet will no longer be needed. We discussed the password dilemma

We can do recommendations on issues and items from the group and forward them to the main IMAC Committee. We will review the items and share at the next meeting. Debbie passed out the "Wish List".

The DHFS organizational chart was distributed. The next meeting is 12-12-02.